

***Evaluation of Resources for Pregnant and Parenting Students in Higher Education at Ball  
State University***

**An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

Pregnant and parenting students are a demographic that often goes unnoticed and if forgotten about, creates an environment of isolation for them. They require additional resources from colleges and universities that are often not met. If these resources are available at these institutions, pregnant and parenting students often have trouble locating them or even who to contact with questions about resources. Through a literature review, a handful of studies have been found examine the needs of the pregnant and parenting student population. From these studies, several challenges and needs have been revealed for this demographic. These challenges include childcare availability, accommodations to the academic environment, flexibility in class options and scheduling, financial aid, affordable housing, transportation and parking, physical accommodations, and accessible information about resources. After evaluating these problems through other case studies and reports, this thesis evaluates the current resources at Ball State University provided for pregnant and parenting students. I then address how these current resources address the established challenges and needs of pregnant and parenting students. Overall, Ball State provides resources that address most of this demographics' concerns, but I propose several solutions to improve upon the resources they already have and provide additional resources that will help their pregnant and parenting students.

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I would also like to thank all the pregnant and parenting students who were brave enough to provide their input on the higher educational system on meeting their needs as nontraditional students.

### **Process Analysis Statement**

My subject for this thesis sprung from my work with pregnant and parenting students at Ball State University. I helped co-found a support group for this demographic and have learned about the challenges they face every day. Many would come to meetings not knowing about any resources or very few resources Ball State provides for pregnant and parenting students. I was especially surprised how few knew of their Title IX rights. Back in the spring of 2017, the people who ran the support group created a resource guide of on- and off-campus resources for pregnant and parenting students to help them find what they need more easily. It spurred the interest to evaluate Ball State's communication of these resources and how effective they are for the reality of these students' situation.

The advisor I chose for this thesis is the faculty advisor for the pregnant and parenting support group and has a passion with working with this demographic. She is also an expert in the field of psychological sciences, which is the area this thesis initially intended to fall under. After choosing my advisor, I then conducted preliminary research on studies on pregnant and parenting students, particularly those in higher education but I also looked into high school studies as well. This preliminary research helped establish a basis of general need for this population and gave me some background knowledge on what other schools are providing for this demographic. I then started the process of approval by the International Review Board (IRB), so I could send conduct a questionnaire for current Ball State pregnant and parenting students. My advisor helped me decide which IRB modules to take and edited my proposal to the IRB. She also helped me design the survey questions. After I received IRB approval, I sent the survey out to people I knew. I continued with research in the meantime.

I continued finding studies on pregnant and parenting students, researching what other universities were providing their students. In addition, I researched Ball State's website to learn more about the resources they provide and verify all the information I already knew. I periodically checked the results of my survey and found I only received three, most likely due to COVID-19 and the shutdown of campus. My advisor and I devised an alternate plan for my thesis that followed a similar structure but without the survey results. To make up for the results I would have seen through the survey, I consulted additional resources of studies about pregnant and parenting students.

With the information I had, I organized my research into sections based upon the themes I found throughout the studies. I then sought the best way to organize my thesis. I first needed to establish background information so my audience would understand this demographic better and establish a need for this thesis. I then divided my thesis into three sections: Challenges and Needs for Pregnant and Parenting Students, Current Resources Available at Ball State University, and Possible Solutions. I originally intended to organize the Challenges and Needs for Pregnant and Parenting Students section by study, establishing their needs through the results of each study. After initial editing, I decided that this section would best be organized by theme, incorporating evidence from the studies into each theme. The list of their challenges and needs were extensive, so I chose the most prominent ones for this thesis.

After establishing the challenges and needs of this demographic, I then provided a thorough account of the resources Ball State University does provide for pregnant and parenting students that address these needs. I provide a summary of these resources and providing links to additional information to establish a basis for how Ball State addresses this population. The next section includes a summary of my analysis of their current resources based upon the need I established in

the first section and five proposed solutions that could better address the needs of Ball State's pregnant and parenting student population. These solutions discuss what is lacking in the current resources to fully provide for these students. I provide evidence from the studies and from other universities on what they are providing their students to show that these changes are needed and feasible.

Overall, I learned so much about pregnant and parenting students, higher education administration, and Ball State as whole through this thesis. Working with pregnant and parenting students, I heard their complaints about the lack of resources they need from the university and originally thought that Ball State did not address their needs adequately. After all this research and evaluating their resources closely, I was surprised to find that comparatively Ball State is an accommodating university for pregnant and parenting students. There are areas that need to be addressed and additional resources that need to be provided, but they have overall provided resources that work to address these needs and challenges. I gained greater respect for the university as a whole and can provide even better support to this population through what I have learned. Also, as someone who wants to work in higher education in the future and possibly create a new division of student affairs for this student demographic, I learned more about the area itself and what it can do to improve.

## **Evaluation of Resources for Pregnant and Parenting Students in Higher Education at Ball State University**

In 2017, 4.8 million students in college were also parents in the United States. Of that 4.8 million, 3.4 million were women, which is 71%. “Forty-three percent of these parenting students are single mothers and 89% identify as low-income” (Madden, 2019). In her study conducted on the experience of low income pregnant and parenting students at community college, Professor Meredith Madden reveals the truth about the seemingly “invisible” demographic. She interviewed 17 women about their experiences juggling the responsibilities of motherhood with the responsibilities as a student. She also brought to light the areas in which many seem to colleges and universities may fail this demographic. Madden’s work suggests that some colleges may fail to provide the resources these students need to achieve their goals. There are also the colleges that provide some helpful resources but fail to adequately inform their students about these resources (Utley, 2007). In 2007, Feminist for Action received results from 117 institutions in the United States from students about their knowledge of resources available for pregnant and parenting students. They stated:

Whether there is an actual lack of basic resources for these students, or the available resources are simply not well communicated, the result is the same for students’ perspectives. For pregnant and parenting students, perception is reality; they do not see themselves as welcomed or supported on most college campuses. (Utley, 2007)

Because information about resources is not readily available, pregnant and parenting students are suffering.

Virginia Brown and Tracey Nichols echo this sentiment with their study “Pregnant and Parenting Students on Campus: Policy and Program Implications for a Growing Population.”

They found similar results about the knowledge of available resources through their interview process of 20 pregnant and parenting students. They also found in their own literature search that “this population has largely gone unnoticed by the academic community...” and that their needs must be accessed and addressed (Brown and Nichols, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to do just that: access and address the needs of pregnant and parenting students. In order to effectively address all these components, I will first establish the challenges and needs of pregnant and parenting students throughout the literature. I will then assess my university’s (Ball State University’s) current resources for pregnant and parenting students. I will then provide an overall evaluation of these sources to address the needs addresses in the first section and propose solutions that will help Ball State University best serve their pregnant and parenting student population.

### **Background Information**

Brown and Nichols (2012) in their study “Pregnant and Parenting Students on Campus: Policy and Procedure Implications for a Growing Population” emphasize the lack of data on the pregnant and parenting students at colleges and universities. One of the many problems this demographic experiences is feelings of isolation, loneliness, and abandonment (Brown and Nichols, 2012). Madden (2019) also expresses this same sentiment in her study after interviewing her 17 participants. Furthermore, she observed that “...the women in this study expressed living in a perpetual state of constant thinking of how to negotiate spaces where as both mothers and students, they often feel they do not belong, and where as women, they often feel that they let others down” (Madden, 2019).

Brown and Nichols (2012) mention that one of the most recent reports completed to examine the number of pregnant and parenting students at colleges and university came from a



2002 report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), demonstrating one way that this demographic seems to go unnoticed. The also mentioned, “Aside from this report and a few isolated studies, there is no definitive count of how many P&P students are attending school. However, as the rate of nontraditional students increases, it is almost certain that the rate of P&P students will follow” (Brown and Nichols 2012). The NCES report stated that 53% of nontraditional students support a dependent. A nontraditional student is defined as “individuals entering college for the first time at age 23 or older,” so they are not all pregnant and parenting students or all students who are pregnant and/or parenting (Ball State University, 2019a).

As with the circumstance of Brown and Nichols, a report on the number of pregnant and parenting students at Ball State cannot be found. When asked about the number of pregnant and parenting students enrolled at Ball State via email, the Title IX Coordinator Katie Slabaugh reported that “I do not know the number of students with pregnancy or related conditions (miscarriage, for example) on campus in any given term, but I do record the number who contact me for information” (K. Slabaugh, personal communication, May 15, 2020). She recorded that there were 11 students who contacted her during the 2018-2019 school year and 7 during the 2019-2020 school year, but this information does not provide adequate information about current pregnant and parenting students. Though there are no estimates for the amount of pregnant and parenting students currently enrolled at Ball State, the lack of information supports the argument that there is not enough information being gathered about the pregnant and parenting student population.

### **Challenges and Needs for Pregnant and Parenting Students**

Through the examination of literature about pregnant and parenting students at colleges and universities, several themes appeared across these studies. These studies revealed numerous

obstacles pregnant and parenting students face that could be addressed by the college or university. This section provides a summary of problems most pregnant and parenting students face and create barriers to equal education and achieving their goals to graduate.

### **Childcare Availability**

According to the Economic Policy Institute (2019), the average cost of childcare/infant care in the state of Indiana is \$12,612 per year. Once a child turns four-years-old, they report that Hoosiers spend an average of \$9,557 per year on childcare. Indiana is ranked 18<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states for most expensive state for childcare. To put this figure into perspective, on average, people spend \$9,038 a year on college education and \$9,613 a year on housing (<https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/IN>, 2019). For low-income student parents, affording childcare is a great challenge. Furthermore, for those who manage to find affordable childcare, it is difficult to navigate the daycare's schedule and their own class schedules.

Madden in her study on low-income pregnant and parenting students at community college noted that "Lack of child care on campus was the most noted missing support" (Madden, 2019). Her participants came from various colleges, but only three offered childcare centers on-campus. The rest of her participants had to rely on family or friends (if that was an option) or expensive daycare options off-campus. Two of the three colleges that offered childcare centers had no openings when her participants were searching for childcare and the third would not take children under the age of three. Brown and Nichols (2012) also reported in their study that the majority of their participants reported that Mid Atlantic State University (MASU)'s childcare center was only for full-time students and also had a long waitlist that forced students to look elsewhere for childcare.

Utleigh (2007) further addressed this issue with their perception study on the resources colleges and universities provide back in 2007 (<https://www.feministsforlife.org/perception-is-reality/>). They had 165 responses from student leaders for their organization from 117 colleges and universities. They reported that only 31% of their participants reported having on-campus childcare. Forty-five percent reported having no childcare centers on-campus, 2% said plans were underway, and 22% did not know. They also asked their participants about infant care since many childcare facilities specify a difference. Twenty-seven percent of the original 31% that reported having on-campus childcare said that they also provided infant care. Sixty-eight percent reported that they were unsure. Five percent said it stated within the policy that they did not care for infants. Additionally, they asked if the colleges connected parents to volunteer or paid babysitters. Only seventeen percent of respondents said that their college or university did facilitate connects. Twenty-seven percent stated that the college or university did not facilitate any connections, and 55% percent of respondents did not know.

### **Accommodations to the Academic Environment**

Student parents have multiple roles to balance. At a minimum, they must balance their responsibilities as students with their responsibilities as parents. Often, they also must balance their roles as workers, friends, family members, and partners. R. Brown and A. Amankwaa (2007) in their study “College Females as Mothers: Balancing the Roles of Student and Motherhood” focused on this aspect of balancing roles. They noted that “the shared experiences of the women suggested that even though they have a hard time performing the role as a mother and student, they agreed that it is possible to have a baby and attend school,” but they need support from the people in their lives and the school (Brown and Amankwaa, 2007).

With her study with mothers, Madden commented that “The participants find that their motherhood status positions them on the classroom margins as voyeurs to the learning of other students and unable to fully access their own educational experiences in the classroom” (Madden, 2019). They are made to feel that their education is less important than the “ideal student” because they need more help than the average student. Madden also stated, “Missing opportunities to engage their education becomes a matter of equality of access, social mobility, educational equity, and quality of life” (Madden, 2019). These students struggle with scheduling classes that fit with the rest of their schedules, working on assignments outside of the classroom, attending classes, and working with their professors to accommodate their extra responsibilities. Some of their struggle is a result of the school system.

In Brown and Nichols’ (2012) study with student parents at Mid Atlantic State University, they observed that these students meticulously planned their lives to fulfill all of their obligations, but even with this planning, the majority reported having to occasionally bring their child(ren) to class or campus. The daycare provided by MASU has a long waitlist and only full-time students can utilize the service. Their participants expressed a need for a drop-in service to help them with their schedules. These students will try to find alternate arrangements for their children, but it is not always possible. From personal experience, I have witnessed that daycares in general have strict policies in regards to illness. At many places, children cannot have a fever to attend daycare that day. When their child(ren) become sick, student parents quickly must find childcare. For single parents without support from family or friends, this task becomes much more difficult. In many cases, their only option to avoid missing out on their education is to bring their child(ren) to class with them.

Title IX does not provide regulations for parenting students, so many schools leave classroom accommodations for parenting students up to the discretion of the professors (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Professors can legally choose to have a policy where parenting students cannot bring their child(ren) to class for any reason. One of the participants in Madden's (2019) study shared this testimony:

Ok, so last semester I had two instructors make this announcement at the start of class when they went over the syllabus. One guy said, "I don't want anyone to ask me about bringing a child to class, even if it's an emergency situation." Last year, my daughter had two snow days in a week and one fell on a test day. So, he also said no make-up tests. If I didn't pass the test, I wouldn't pass the class. Last time I showed up late to his test by ten minutes and I told him it was because the sitter didn't show up to watch the baby and I had to take her over to my mom's, and then get to school. He made me sit there without giving me the test. I just had to sit there so I wouldn't lose points for attendance. So, I couldn't risk not taking another test. So, I brought her, my older girl. I just sat her down next to me in the chair and she didn't say a word. He came over. I told him it was a snow day. He wouldn't give me the test! That damn man wouldn't let me take the test! We marched out of there, and I'm telling you it's those things that make it real, real hard to come back here. (Madden, 2019).

Another participant mentioned one time she had to bring her baby with her to a professor's office hours. The professor asked her to leave the stroller with the baby outside his office during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, the professor made sure that she remembered that she could not bring her child to class. She commented on the experience during her interview, "I've never once brought the baby to class, but I still feel like he doesn't like me since then. So I just sit in the back corner" (Madden, 2019). For those in similar situations, they have to choose between breaking professors' rules or taking an absence. Too many absences will cause students to fail their classes, so many students choose to try what they can when their normal childcare is interrupted.

Beyond the difficulties within the classroom, parenting students also struggle with meeting requirements outside the classroom. Parenting student echoed the difficulty with group projects as parents. Parenting student Claire participated in Brown and Nichols (2012) study. When asked

about her peers' perceptions of herself as a parenting student, she commented, 'I know that there are better study groups, better members of study groups than mine but I can't participate because they are either unable or unwilling to bend to my schedule or location requirements' (Brown and Nichols, 2012). Nikiya, a parenting student from Madden's (2019) study, mentioned in her interview that she once witnessed a past instructor's negative attitude towards another student bringing her baby to class. She remarked that it summarized the school's culture on the perception of pregnant and parenting students. She raised the question about students' multiple identities and how certain students' such as athletes receive special accommodations to balance their identities, yet pregnant and parenting students are met with inflexibility and unsupportive practices and policies.

### **Flexibility in Class Options and Scheduling**

Many colleges and universities today provide online classes as a more flexible alternative to in-person classes, but many programs do not offer such options. At Ball State, there are only 7 majors that are entirely online: Applied Behavior Analysis, Business Administration, Criminal Justice and Criminology, Early Childhood Education, General Studies, Logistics and Supply Chain Management, and Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science (Ball State University, 2019b). Other departments might have a handful of classes that provide with an online option, but online classes are not offered for every major and are not offered for the majority of classes. For pregnant and parenting students, this factor can cause scheduling conflicts with their other responsibilities for their children. Not having flexible scheduling can cause them to delay graduation, especially when classes are only offered during one semester of the year. Claire from Brown and Nichols' (2012) study mentioned that she wished the university provided more online class options or allowed parenting students to register for classes early like seniors, athletes, and honors' students. Claire

mentioned that she tries to register for classes between 9 am and 1 pm because that is when her children are in class or daycare, but many of her classes' sections are taken before she has a chance to register. She also mentioned that she planned her class schedule around drop-off and pick-up at the daycare center because she would be charged with a late fee if she was late for either. This process eliminates early morning and evening classes. The lack of flexibility creates even more challenges with finishing her degree.

Other students from Madden's (2019) study suggest adding more flexible scheduling after trying online classes. Marina commented in her interview that it was difficult to complete classwork at home with her kids and husband because they would interrupt her whenever they needed her. She also expressed concern over asking questions. For in-person classes, she can ask a question and follow-up or clarify questions right away, but with online classes, answers to questions were delayed and not always clear. It impacted what work she completed and how well she did in the class. In a study conducted by R. Brown and A. Amankwaa (2007) on the experience of college females balancing their roles, many of their participants agreed with the sentiments expressed by Marina. One student explained that she was often distracted by her crying baby. It is just her, so she is the only one who can care for her baby. Another student said that she tries to do schoolwork at night once the baby is asleep because it is so difficult to get work done during the day but not all her work can be completed in a single night. They need greater options and more flexibility to accommodate their stressful situations.

### **Financial Aid**

Most students worry about the affordability of college. Pregnant and parenting students with the extra costs that are associated with their additional roles also struggle with affording colleges. Brown and Nichols' (2012) study revealed that financial aid and finances were the

second greatest barrier for pregnant and parenting students not completing their degrees. Most students that they interviewed reported that financial aid has been a great support. They reported that “loans [have] given them peace of mind, eliminating the need for several to work, and allowing them to both parent and attend school as once” (Brown and Nichols, 2012). Not all students, though, could live off their loans alone. One student in the study mentioned that she and her husband needed their financial aid and the paycheck her husband received working 40 hours a week just to make ends meet. Another student mentioned that she had to take a 20 hour a week job in addition to loans to survive. Brown and Nichols (2012) reported that only 5 of the participants could attend school without working. Eleven worked part-time hours from outside employment, on-campus work, work-studies, or assistantships, working between 3.5 and 40 hours a week with an average of 20 hours a week. Five participants worked full-time jobs between 35 and 40 hours a week. One participant worked three part-time jobs for 55 hours per week. Four of the participants had to move to being part-time students because of finances, and one student needed to take a leave of absence from school.

Brown and Nichols (2012) also asked students if they thought about how they were going to pay back their loans once they had graduated. They noted only a few students addressed this issue, but those that did were filled with dread and fear at the idea. One of the students Heather commented, ‘It’s scary...I mean it’s really fantastic initially but then you know, ‘whoa, I got to return that money’.’ (Brown and Nichols, 2012). They also noted that “Most other participants avoided discussing what would happen after graduation, making it unclear whether they understood they would have to repay it or decided to ignore this fact or the time being,” highlighting the stress for pregnant and parenting students.



Utlely also addressed the issues of finances in their 2007 report. They asked about scholarships and loans for pregnant and parenting students. Sixty-nine percent were unsure if there were any scholarships or loans available specifically for pregnant and parenting students. Twenty-five percent said there were none available, and 6% said there were specific scholarships and loans for pregnant and parenting student. Utlely then asked about housing loans and scholarships. Sixty-seven percent said that they did not know if there were housing loans and scholarships, while 23% percent said there were none and 9% said there were.

### **Affordable Housing**

Though finding housing does not seem to be an issue for pregnant and parenting students, students who initially become pregnant are not sure where to start with housing. For the institutions mentioned in the studies on pregnant and parenting students, the majority seem to allow students to stay in residential halls until the baby is born. Once the baby is born, they need to move out of the dorms and either into campus housing (if they have it) or off-campus. In the Feminists' for Life (2007) study, they asked about students' knowledge of available housing on- and off-campus. Forty-six percent of respondents said there were no housing on-campus, and 22% said their campuses had some sort of housing situation besides residence halls. When asked about off-campus housing unassociated with the institution, 74% said the housing was affordable with the other 16% saying they were unsure.

Parenting students have difficulty with affording housing or getting housing on-campus. Brown and Nichols (2012) reported that one of their undergraduate females Sally transitioned from pregnancy to parenthood during the interview process. Once the baby was born, Sally had to transfer to a community college and move back home because there was no availability in the

student family housing. She said she would have stayed at the university had there been availability in the student family housing.

### **Transportation and Parking**

The lack of parking on-campus at colleges and universities is a reoccurring problem and a complaint by many students, as I have witnessed as a student myself. Social media often captures these sentiments with students complaining about struggles to find parking for classes. Brown and Nichols (2012) also found that “the lack of parking, along with the need to walk across a large campus for classes, was particularly relevant for pregnant students” (Brown and Nichols, 2012). One of the student participants Erin mentioned in her interviews that the lack of parking in combination with morning sickness and a full course load made the first trimester of her pregnancy very difficult and stressful. Another student explained how the lack of parking affected her Tuesdays and Thursdays:

[It is] touch and go from the parking lot or from [her son's] school to the parking lot, waiting on the shuttle, getting the shuttle over here, walking to class. It's a pain in my ass. [Stress in voice] and especially at the end of the day where Tuesdays and Thursdays, my class gets out at 1:45. And then I've got to walk all the way across campus to the shuttle. It takes 10 minutes. The shuttle ride, which can take 10 to 15 minutes, walk through the parking lot to my car, another 10 minutes and then have to somehow manage to get him by 2 o'clock. [Voice crack] I have 15 minutes and it's just not doable most days. Most days I show up and his teacher is sitting there waiting for me. (Brown and Nichols, 2012).

Though the Mid Atlantic State University has University-sponsored buses, off-campus parking, and a "Park and Ride" shuttle services, sometimes they are not enough when one is forced to park a long distance from the heart of campus.

For pregnant students, the experience can be stressful trying to walk to classes with the added weight to their bodies. From personal experience, University buses and shuttles do not come with seatbelts and are often filled past capacity, so for someone who is already experiencing morning sickness, the shuttles are not an option. Participants from MASU confirmed that their

shuttles do not have seatbelts. For parenting students, that is a safety factor. One parent would not take the shuttle because there was no way for her to secure a car seat. It is also difficult for parenting students with young children who are fussy and will not stay in their seats or remain quiet. They receive complaints and stares that cause embarrassment and discomfort. Many of the participants wished that the university had parking for pregnant students and/or parents with infants or small children. Utley (2007) found that 90% of their respondents did not have designated parking for pregnant women or parents with infants, so the problem is very widespread among institutions.

### **Physical Accommodations**

Physical accommodations for pregnant and parenting students are sometimes resources that the average person would never think about. Physical accommodations include a stroller-accessible campus, lactation rooms, and diaper-changing stations in bathrooms. Utley (2007) revealed the gap about awareness and accessibility for these resources in their study. They found that 87% of students said their campuses were stroller-friendly, and 7% found them inaccessible. In order to be stroller friendly, campuses had to have features such as elevators, ramps, and curb ramps. Though 87% is a great statistic, it is still shocking that 7% of students said campus was “not physically accommodating to those transporting children,” indicating that the campus is also not accessible for people using wheelchairs (Utley, 2007).

Utley (2007) also asked about diaper-changing stations and lactation rooms. Only twenty-three percent said that there were diaper-changing stations in restrooms, while 61% said there were no diaper-changing stations. In regards to lactation rooms, only 3% of respondents reported knowing there were lactation rooms on-campus with 77% saying there were not and 20% unsure. In Brown and Nichols’ (2012) study, one of their participants Wanda mentioned during her

interview that she had issues with public nursing with her infant because there were no lactation rooms at the time. During interviews, it was revealed that a private lactation room had recently been provided by the university. They stated:

The room was made available to faculty, staff, and students on a first-come, first-serve basis. However the majority of the students were not aware of this resource, which may have been due to its location in the back of the library and the lack of advertising when it was first opened. (Brown and Nichols, 2012).

As resources that would be utilized by a wide range of people at the university (guests, students, faculty, and staff), it is surprising that these physical accommodations are not more prevalent.

### **Accessible Information about Resources**

A major concern for pregnant and parenting students is the accessibility of information. As indicated by the results from the “Perception is Reality: Pregnancy and Parenting Resources on Campus” report from Utley (2007), a major portion of respondents did not know if their colleges or universities had some of these resources mentioned above. When they asked if resources for pregnant and parenting student could be found on the college/university website, 40% said they could not find any, 48% said they did not know, and 62% said that there was no mention of these resources during first year orientation. Utley (2007) also noted that “educational materials and brochures are the most likely sources of information about resources and support, but only 17 percent of respondents said those sources were readily available on their campus” (Utley, 2007). Forty-two percent of respondents did not know if their college or university provided any educational materials for pregnant and parenting students, and 38% stated that their college or university did not provide any. When asked if students knew if there was a person or department at the college or university to talk, 50% said they did not know, 33% there was not, and only 16% said yes. Pregnant and parenting students need resources to be more advertised and readily

available, so they can find the resources they need to accomplish their goals and balance their roles as students and parents.

### **Current Resources Available at Ball State University**

In addition to presenting the overall state of concerns for pregnant and parenting students, the purpose of this paper is to assess the resources available at a midwestern state university such as Ball State University. The section outlines the resources Ball State University currently offers for pregnant and parenting students.

#### **Childcare**

Back in 1998, Ball State established The Child Study Center right off campus on Cardinal Street. This center allowed faculty, staff, and students to enroll in an educational program lab school from 6 weeks old to three years old (Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, n.d.). Students majoring in Infant and Child Development classes, Child Development, Child Life Specialists, and students within the Family Consumer Sciences majors create lesson plans and observe the children in this program. According to a notice released by Ball State's Marketing and Communication Department on March 26, 2019, Ball State Child Study Center partnered with the YMCA of Muncie's Apple Tree Child Development to repurpose a closed elementary school to create the Mitchell Early Childhood and Family Center. The Child Study Center was relocated within the YMCA August 2019.

This center provides developmental programs for ages 6 weeks 5 years through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. According to their website, their programs include the following:

- Model teaching environment for childcare centers
- Developmentally appropriate, Reggio-inspired, whole-child focused curriculum
- Professional development and practical experiences for future educators as student teachers engage in the classrooms with children
- Family engagement component including support and resources for families
- Opportunities for faculty and student research

- Ball State faculty support from the Department of Early Childhood, Youth, and Family Studies in the Teachers College

After speaking with one of their directors, she reported that infant programs are \$287 per week and programs for children ages 3-5 years old are \$225 per week. For part-time services for Monday, Wednesday, Friday sessions, the rates are \$157 for infants and \$201 for ages 3 to 5 years old. For part-time services for Tuesday and Thursday sessions, the rate are \$152 for infants and \$119 for ages 3 to 5 years old (Amy, personal communication, May 15, 2020). These prices are comparable to prices from the Child Study Care. For more information about these prices, visit [this link](#).

### **Online Classes and Flexible Scheduling**

Ball State provides 2 Associate Degrees, 7 Bachelor's Degrees, and 25 Graduate Degrees completely online with some having in-person class options. Four of their Doctoral and Specialist Degrees provide a blend of online and in-person classes, and they have several certificates available online at the undergraduate and graduate levels, according to their website (Ball State University, 2019b). They do not specifically list individual classes they offer within majors and minors on their website, but from experience, some majors have a few classes that are offered online in addition to in-person classes. On their website for the Summer 2020 session, Ball State provides ten-week online courses and five-week online courses (Ball State University, 2020d). The five-week courses are offered at different times during the summer. There are 200 ten-week online courses, 90 five-week online courses in the first half of the semester, and 62 five-week online courses in the second half of the semester. For a complete list of all the classes offered, visit [this link](#). For a complete list of the degrees they provide online, visit [this link](#).

Students who need to examine options for alternate class options should contact their academic advisors. Pregnant and parenting students can also contact the Title IX Coordinator Katie Slabaugh. She will work these students as much as possible to discuss options.

### **Scholarships and Financial Aid**

Ball State University does not specifically provide any scholarships for pregnant and parenting students, but they have an extensive list of scholarships on their website and tools to see what scholarships students can apply (Ball State University, 2020b). For incoming freshmen, they have a feature on their website that allows incoming freshmen to determine what merit-based scholarships they would be eligible for by providing their GPA and scores from any entrance exams if they chose to take them. They also provide links to reputable sources to find outside scholarships to specifically apply to a students' situation in addition to the scholarships Ball State provides themselves. One scholarship sponsored by the BSU Women's Club for nontraditional students is listed on the site. The scholarship is open to undergraduate and graduate students who are enrolled at least half-time, have a 3.0 GPA, have completed 24 credit hours (15 of which need to have been from Ball State), and have completed their FASFA before the deadline for the scholarship. For more information on this specific website, visit [bsuwc.org/scholarship](https://bsuwc.org/scholarship) (Ball State University Women's Club, 2020). For a complete list of all scholarships Ball State offers, please visit this [link](#).

Ball State University also provide up-to-date information of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on their website (Ball State University, 2020b). They explain who applies for the aid, the types of loans, payment methods, and other important details. The Financial Aids and Scholarships Department at Ball State will also work with students on applying for the FAFSA.

### On-Campus Apartments

Ball State has two on-campus apartments: Anthony and Scheidler Complexes. Parenting students are eligible to live in either complex. The following is a statement on Ball State's website about the complexes: "Our two communities...accommodate upper-level single students, students with families, and Ball State faculty members. These apartments are connected to the university but offer independence, a family-like atmosphere, and a safe environment" (Ball State University, n.d.). Anthony Complex has 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units, while Scheidler Complex has 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, and 3-bedroom units. **Table 1** below shows the rates for Anthony Complex. **Table 2** below shows the rates for Scheidler Complex.

**Table 1**

ANTHONY APARTMENTS RATES		
Apartment Type	Monthly Rent (Academic Year)	Monthly Rent (One Semester Only)
1 Bedroom	\$608	\$658
2 Bedroom	\$737 (\$369 per single roommate)	\$787 (\$419 per single roommate)*

\* There is an additional monthly charge for students signing a semester only lease. For students sharing one apartment, the extra fee will be charged to all students who sign a lease.

\*\*Note: Table provided by Ball State University. (n.d.). *University Apartments*. Ball State University. <https://www.bsu.edu/campuslife/housing/university-apartments>



**Table 2**

SCHEIDLER APARTMENTS RATES		
Apartment Type	Monthly Rent (Academic Year)	Monthly Rent (One Semester Only)
1 Bedroom*	\$745	\$795
2 Bedroom (unfurnished)	\$731 (\$366 per single roommate)	\$781 (\$416 per single roommate)**
2 Bedroom (furnished)	\$850 (\$425 per single roommate)	\$900 (\$475 per single roommate)**
3 Bedroom	\$828	\$878

\* Includes washer/dryer in apartment.

\*\*Note: Table provided by Ball State University. (n.d.). *University Apartments*. Ball State University.  
<https://www.bsu.edu/campuslife/housing/university-apartments>

According to their website and according to my own personal experience living at Scheidler Complex, housing scholarships such as the Presidential Scholarship or the Presidential Room and Board Scholarship can apply towards rent for these complexes. Utilities (electricity, heat, water, sewage, trash removal, and internet service) are included in the price of rent. Both complexes have a laundry facility on-site. For students that have lived in Ball State Residence Halls for two consecutive years, they are eligible for the University Apartments PLUS Plan. Students on this plan are given a free commuter parking pass and \$250 in dining plus per semester (not including summer). The following are amenities at these complexes:

- Air Conditioning: provided in both Anthony Apartments and Scheidler apartments with some exception dependent on Scheidler unit type
- Community Room: includes a widescreen TV, VCR, stereo sound system, kitchen, and furniture. Use of the community requires no additional charges.
- Computer Lab: contains computers, printer, and scanner
- Laundry Facilities: washer and dryers operated by credit card through the SpeedQueen app or through quarters
- Maintenance: routine maintenance and repairs
- Parking: lots located in each unit for residents and visitors

- Pets: for an additional fee and residents must follow the link to the **University Apartment Pet Policy**
- Social and Educational Activities
- Recreation Areas: sand volleyball pit and playgrounds
- Storage cubicles: only located at Scheidler Complex

### **Transportation and Parking**

As of the fall 2018, Ball State University (2019d) has installed parking spaces for expectant mothers. The pass can be obtained with a signed and completed Doctor's release, which they include the form of their website, and returned to Parking Services. Those seeking the parking pass have to already have an existing parking permit at the university whether that be a student, faculty, or retired employee permit. These parking spaces for expectant mothers are located around campus at the following locations:

- R6 red restrict lot (ground floor)
- R7 red restrict lot (ground floor)
- R8 red restricted lot (ground floor)
- C1 green commuter lot (near bus stop)
- G2 yellow faculty/staff lot (Northwest corner)
- G10 yellow faculty/staff lot (Northwest corner)

In addition to the parking pass for expectant mothers, Ball State University (2020e) also has University Shuttles that travel around campus and even stop at both University Apartment Complexes. There are four types of shuttles –Red Loop, Green Loop, Blue Loop, and Orange Loop – that have different routes. There is a shuttle around every 5-10 minutes at each stop. These shuttles are available for students, staff, and faculty.

Ball State (2020a) also has a charter system called “Charlie’s Charter.” It operates from 6 pm to 3 am Sunday through Thursday. The service is free for Ball State students, faculty, and staff. For more information, please visit this [link](#).

### **Physical Accommodations**

Ball State University prides themselves as being an accessible campus. In March 2019, *College Magazine* released an issue on the top 10 most accessible campuses for people with disabilities. Ball State was listed as number 1. The article states, “From accessible housing to wheelchair sports to attendant care, Ball State University makes its campus accessible to all. In the classroom, adjustable seating and tables make it easy for students to learn comfortably no matter their disability” (Chang 2019). The campus includes elevators, ramps, and curb ramps throughout campus. Every academic building, administrative building and residence hall has an elevator, making the campus accessible for wheelchairs and strollers.

Ball State University (2020c) has numerous lactation rooms throughout campus. Lactation rooms can be found in the following buildings:

- Bracken Library – Room 414
- Ball Communication Building – Room 180A
- Administration Building – Room 234
- Applied Technology – Room 140A
- Alumni Center – Room AL 107
- L.A. Pittenger Student Center – Room L-16A
- Health Professions Building – Room 436

To gain access to these lactation rooms, student, faculty, or staff have to have an access card. One can be obtained by visiting the Working Well office in the Student Health Center room HC 004 or their office. For access in the Alumni Center, people need to visit the front desk. For access in the L.A. Pittenger Student Center, people must visit the Ball State Hotel front desk.

Ball State also has some diaper-changing stations throughout campus. Students for Life’s Pregnant on Campus Initiative recorded where the diaper-changing stations were located on-campus and published the information in a resource guide for pregnant and parenting students. The following is a list of locations for diaper-changing stations (Pregnant on Campus Initiative, 2018; Students for Life at Ball State, 2018):

- Alumni Center – Room 107
- Applied Technology – Room 140A
- Arts and Communication Building – located between rooms 107 and 113
- Ball Gymnasium – Room 015
- Bracken Library – Rooms 142 and 144 (*Men's and Women's Restroom*)
- Fine Arts Building and Museum of Arts – Room 215
- Emens Auditorium – Rooms 006, 017, 105A, 109A
- Music Instruction Building – Unisex Bathroom
- Student Center – Rooms 108, 113, 354A, 220
- Student Recreation and Wellness Center – Rooms 140A, 140B (*Men's and Women's Restrooms*)
- Sursa Performance Hall – Unisex Bathroom
- University Theatre – Room 133
- West Quad – Rooms 002 (*Men's Restroom*), 003 (*Women's Restroom*)
- Worthen Arena – Restrooms at Gates 1, 2, and 3

Overall, Ball State provides a wide variety of physical accommodations.

### **Proposed Solutions**

Overall, Ball State addresses most the major challenges and needs of pregnant and parenting students. However, there are some areas that need to be addressed further. The following section addresses three areas that could use improvement.

#### **On-Campus Childcare**

The Mitchell Early Childhood and Family Center is a great place for childcare and comes with many benefits, including a complimentary YMCA membership for the entire family. It provides a Reggio-inspired learning style and is very adaptable to children with various needs. Though the program provides many benefits, it is not located on-campus. It is about a 10-minute drive, depending where someone is on campus. Location is key for these participants. When viewing the individual responses from Feminists for Life's (2007) study, several people indicated that their campuses used to have daycares, but they either discontinued them or moved them off-campus. One participant remarked, "The on-campus (not free) childcare moved a few miles away from campus. Though still affiliated with the school, students' children do not have priority over

the general community” (Utley, 2007). This exact case mirrors Ball State’s new partnership with the YMCA. Before, with the Child Study Center, it was only open to students, staff, and faculty (Ball State University, 2019c). Now, the center is open to anyone. To combat such issues, Participants in both Madden’s (2019) and Brown and Nichols’ (2012) study suggested the campus invest in a drop-in babysitting center, with some suggesting pairing up with local churches for volunteers to run the center.

In their literature review, Brown and Nichols (2012) mentioned two schools that provide on-campus daycare: Stanford and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill provides students with subsidized childcare. A drop-off childcare facility would be useful not only to students but also faculty and staff to pick up their children whenever they are done with classes or work. Ball State could seek assistance from local churches and the newly established club Pregnant and Parenting Students at Ball State. Informants from Brown and Nichols’ (2012) study mentioned that there was a “campus-wide movement to establish a small student fee for resources for pregnant and parenting students.” They stated:

Another key informant spoke of a campus-wide movement to institute a small student fee for resources targeting pregnant and parenting students. The funds generated were used to create a subsidy for childcare. The university then contracted with a local agency which identifies and grades daycare centers in the area to provide good daycare for the students. A family expenditure cap was set at 10% for students, with the rest paid for from the funds. (Brown and Nichols, 2012)

Ball State could discuss the option of implementing such a program.

### **Academic Alternatives**

Ball State offers a variety of online classes, but a majority of their classes are not offered online. They should consider offering more classes online to accommodate their students. As indicated previously, students struggle to schedule classes around their child(ren)’s schedules. Having online classes for those who would benefit from them would eliminate some of that

difficulty. In addition, this would open the university to more enrollment from students looking for online programs or live out of state. It would also open students' schedules for more immerse learning opportunities and internships.

### **Priority Scheduling**

From my experience at Ball State, I know they provide priority scheduling for seniors, honors students, and athletes. Several students in Brown and Nichols' (2012) study suggested priority scheduling for parenting students as mentioned previously. Having priority scheduling would help these students better navigate their child(ren)'s schedule with their own. It could increase their attendance and decrease the amount of time spent in school earning their degrees.

### **Improved Advertisement of Current Resources**

When searching the term "pregnant" on Ball State's website, the Title IX page is the only page that comes up. The Title IX page provides information for pregnant students' rights. They provide a summary of the Title IX policy and contact information for Katie Slabaugh, the Title IX Coordinator, if students have additional questions. Students would have to individually look up housing, financial aid, childcare, etc. to find the majority of information they need. If students meet with Katie Slabaugh, they would receive some additional information about resources within the community and on-campus, but the information is not provided online. The Pregnant on Campus Initiative published a resource guide for pregnant and parenting back in 2018 with a detailed list of information pregnant and parenting students might need. This organization is now called Pregnant and Parenting Students and is an official club of the University (BennyLink, 2020). Ball State could partner with this organization to update the guide they have already published and post it on their website, in addition to links to further resources. This solution would address the issue with a lack of awareness of available resources for pregnant and parenting students.

**Syllabus Addendum and Teacher Training:**

It would be beneficial for faculty and students if universities provided Title IX guidelines for pregnant and parenting students within their syllabi and overall class policies. As presented previously, universities do not provide a standard policy about bringing children to the classroom. The lack of a policy allows professors to dictate policy based on their preferences, leading many to not address the issue at all unless they have strong objections to children being in the classroom. Having professors state Title IX guidelines for pregnant and parenting students and provide a statement within their syllabi that addresses concerns for pregnant and parenting students. A current Ball State professor provides a statement of diversity for pregnant and parenting students within her syllabus that works well. Her statement is influenced by Dr. Melissa Cheyney of Oregon State University. The following is the statement that Professor Kim Brown from Ball State uses in her syllabus (K. Brown, personal communication, May 28, 2020):

**Policy on Children in Class:** Currently, the university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here is a reflection of both my own beliefs and my commitment to student, staff and faculty parents.

- 1) All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary
- 2) For older children and babies, I understand that unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to miss class to stay home with a child. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.
- 3) I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.
- 4) In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and it is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met.
- 5) Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have finally gone to sleep. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school parenting balance.

In addition to having a policy that professors provide their students, it would be beneficial if faculty and staff received additional educational training on Title IX especially in regard to

pregnant and parenting students. It would help faculty and staff know how to better support this demographic and better address the overall needs of pregnant and parenting students. Training could provide more flexible solutions for professors who do not wish students to bring their children to class in case of an emergency.

### **Additional Suggestions**

Brown and Nichols (2012) mentioned in their study that a university was able to establish a small student fee that provided resources for pregnant and parenting students. In addition to the childcare, the university was also able to establish a dormitory for graduate students, married couples, and families, lactation rooms campus-wide, and a representative on the campus' presidential board "to serve as the voice for the population and ensure that they are not overlooked as new policies and decisions are made" (Brown and Nichols, 2012). They stated that these additional resources have "created a higher retention and graduation rate for pregnant and parenting students (93%) at the university than their nonparenting counterparts (86%)" (Brown and Nichols, 2012). If Ball State established something similar or additional resources, they could increase their retention and graduation rate for their pregnant and parenting students. In addition or instead of additional lactation rooms (since they have some in 7 buildings), Ball State could add additional diaper-changing stations in more buildings. Most of the buildings that have diaper-changing stations are buildings that the public would most visit, not the academic buildings. From experience with pregnant and parenting students, having to find a place to change their child is a stressful situation for parenting students, especially in between class. If their classes are not near buildings with diaper-changing stations, they could end up late to class or cause them to have to change their child on the floor of the bathroom or the counters. Adding diaper-changing stations to every academic building would alleviate some of this stress.



### **Conclusion**

Pregnant and parenting students are often an overlooked population. They often need additional resources and help from their colleges or universities to balance their roles as both students and parents, but these challenges and needs are not always met from these institutions. Through the establishment of published studies on this demographic, the major challenges and needs of pregnant and parenting students have been established. Pregnant and parenting students addressed available and affordable childcare (with an emphasis to childcare on-campus), accommodative academic environments, flexible classes and scheduling, financial aid, affordable housing, transportation and parking, physical accommodations (such as stroller-friendly campuses, diaper-changing stations, and lactation rooms), and accessibility of information about resources as their main challenges.

Ball State has already addressed several of these needs. For childcare, they have partnered with the YMCA in Muncie to establish the Mitchell Early Childhood and Family Center. They already have some online majors and courses that students can take, provide information on additional scholarships students can apply for, have on-campus apartments for families, provide a parking pass for expectant mothers and University shuttles to help with commutes, and are a stroller-friendly/wheelchair accessible campus with diaper-changing stations and lactation rooms around campus.

In order to better address some of these needs, I have suggested that Ball State partner with location organizations, churches, or the Pregnant and Parenting Student club to establish a drop-off daycare on-campus to eliminate the stress that off-campus daycares with strict schedules cause parenting students. I also suggested that they provide additional classes online for students who need a more flexible schedule. These additional classes would also appeal to students looking for

online programs or to open their schedules to additional programs that Ball State offers. Along with additional online classes, to help parenting students better manage their roles as students and parents, I suggested that pregnant and parenting students be given priority scheduling. Priority scheduling would allow them to take additional classes that otherwise would conflict with their child(ren)'s schedules and allow them to graduate sooner. I also suggested that Ball State follow in the footsteps of a university that established a small student fee to provide additional resources to pregnant and parenting students.

Lastly, with the amount of resources Ball State provides for pregnant and parenting students, it would benefit the institution and their students to provide a website page for pregnant and parenting students with a multitude of resources on the page or creating an online guide for pregnant and parenting students. Making information more accessible for their students fits within their overall mission to be as accessible as possible to their student body. Having these resources online in a single place would increase the amount of people who know about the resources and would entice future students looking for campuses that accommodating to parenting students. Assessing and addressing the needs of pregnant and parenting students and the challenges they overgo with their multiple roles will best determine how to serve this demographic better. Ball State provides a multitude of resources, but they are not effectively promoted, which questions how effectively the resources meet the needs of their students. By adjusting some of the resources already in place, making them more well-known, and advocating more for this demographic, Ball State could provide more effective resources for pregnant and parenting students.

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